The History of the

BLIND BEGGAR

Of Bethnal Green;

SHEWING,

His Birth and Parentage.

His going to the Wars, losing his Sight, and turning Beggar at Bethnal Green.

Of his getting Riches, and the Education of his Daughter; who is courted by a young Knight.

Of the Beggar's dropping Gold with the Knight's Uncle.

Of the Knight's Marriage with the Beggar's Daughter; and the Discovery of his famous Pedigree.

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The Beggar trav'lling with his Dog,
Brings home good ſtore of Wealth to prog

With which he does outvie the Knight,
And weds his Child to her delight.

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THE HISTORY OF THE Blind BEGGAR, &c.

CHAP. I.

Monford and his Wife goes to the Wars of France, and afterwards returns to England.

IN former days, when the Roſe of England eclipſed the French Lillies, among other brave gallants, who went to try their fortune, was one Monford, a perſon who was well deſcended: who, being greedy of fame, not the intreaty of friends, nor his marriage with a beautiful lady, could alter his purpoſe, but croſſing the ſea to Calais, he marched to the royal

ſtandard, accompanied by his wife, who in manlike dreſs became his inſeparable companion in all dangers, and was the means of ſaving his life; for in an encounter between the Engliſh and French, young Monford being too hot in the purſuit, was entrapped in an ambuſh, and though he bravely defended himſelf, he was beat from his horſe, and left on the field for dead, where he had ſurely periſhed, had not his tender hearted wife Margaret, upon hearing what had paſſed, returned to the field, where ſearching among the ſlain by moon light, ſhe diſcovered him ſtripped, and ſtruggling for life, and by the help of a ſervant brought him to a ſhepherd's cottage, where ſhe dreſſed his wounds, and recovered him, to their mutual joy; though this joy was much abated, when they found he had loſt his ſight; but true love working in her heart, this misfortune could not alter her affection, but comforting him in the beſt manner ſhe could, ſhe brought him back to England, now unfit for ſervice, and they ſettled at Bethnal Green, in the county of Middleſex.

CHAP.

CHAP II.

Monford arrives in England; of his cold Entertainment from his Friends; and his resolution to beg on Bethnal Green.

MOnford escaping the storm, on his return landed in Essex, where he had some rich relations, to whom he applied himself, but found cold Entertainment; insomuch that scorning to rely on their charity, he told the kind partner of his joy and sorrow, that he intended early in the morning to hasten towards London, and that he had rather trust to providence, than the gratitude of those who in his prosperity had caressed him. His wife cherished him, saying she would not be idle, but do the utmost of her endeavours.—And so without taking leave of any, early in the morning they departed, and in two days travelling, having spent what little money they had, necessity so far humbled his high spirit, that he did not think it amiss to crave the charity of people; who understanding the

got his blindneſs in fighting for the honour of his country, gave very liberally; inſomuch that he reſolved to be of good cheer, finding charity flowed upon him faſter than he expected; whereupon arriving at a place called Bethnal Green, with the little money good people had given him, he hired a ſmall cottage for his wife and himſelf, and daily appeared publickly to beg alms.

Hence he was called the Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green; and in a ſhort time he found it a thriving trade; inſomuch, that his bed of ſtraw was changed for one of down, and all his other utenſils for thoſe of a better ſort.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Monford meets with Snap, and old experienced Beggar; who gives him Light into the Myſteries of the Canting Trade.

MOnford reſolving to ſpend the reſt of his time in this manner, having had good ſucceſs by the ſide of the road, was one day encountered by an old proficient at the trade, who being deſirous of knowing his Gang, began to Cant; of which kind of ſpeech (being known to none but themſelves) he being ignorant, could make him no anſwer; which the other, whoſe name was Snap, perceiving, and by that knowing him to be a young beginer, he invited him to their rendezvous in Whitechapel, whither he went, and they between them tippled off four black pots of hum, and for that time they parted.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Monford goes to the Beggar's Feaſt, and of his Entertainment.

MONFORD, on his coming home, declared to his wife what a companion he had met with, and whither he had been invited to go; and ſhe adviſed him to perform his promiſe, and led him thither herſelf.—Snap knew him at firſt ſight, and taking him by the hand, preſented him with a bell and a dog, trained to the buſineſs, who had been the companion of an eyeleſs beggar deceaſed; and having both feaſted him and his ſpouſe in a ſplended manner, they diſ-

miſſed them, on purpoſe that he would not be wanting at the yearly feaſt; and being diſmiſſed, he trudged home with his tractable guide, which ever after was moſt ſerviceable to him.

CHAP. V.

Of his Succeſs, and having a Daughter, whom he named Elizabeth.

THE Blind Beggar, by theſe fortunate adventures, ſcorned to be confined to his former plying places: but by the help of his dog, he often trudged to London, where he picked up ſo much money, that he frequently uſed to chaunt the following ſong.

A Beggar leads a merry life,
And hath both wealth and eaſe;
His days are free from care and ſtrife
He doth whate'er he pleaſe.

While others labour, ſweat, and toil
His tongue doth gain him pelf:
He travels with his dog and bell,
And brings home ſtore of wealth.

He being at this time in eaſy circumſtances, to compleat his ſatisfaction had a daughter born, who was very beautiful, and which made him think himſelf the happieſt man alive.—An hundred times he kiſſed her, and dandled her in his arms, and at her chriſtening (which was performed with decency and prudence) cauſed her to be named Elixabeth; from whence ſhe was called Pretty Beſſey.

As ſhe grew up, her beauty, wit, ſhape, and other perfections were ſo extraordinary, that her praiſes were always ſpoken of, eſpecially by the young men, which made the maids ſeek all opportunities openly to affront her, frequently calling her Beggar's Brat, which ſhe bore as long as ſhe could, with a becoming patience, and ſtrove by gentle perſuaſions to make them deſiſt from their reflections; but all proving to no purpoſe, ſhe deſired her parents to let her go and ſeek her fortune; to which they both conſented, with tears in their eyes, though they a long time oppoſed it, uſing many arguments to perſuade her to the contrary; but finding her reaſons weighty, and tending to her advantage, they left her to her own diſcretion.

CHAP. VI.

The Beggar's Daughter leaves her Father's Houſe to ſeek her Fortune, and of her Entertainment.

THE day being come that pretty Beſſey ſhould depart, being furniſhed with cloaths, money, and other neceſſaries, ſhe fell on her knees, craving her father's bleſſing, which granted, they took a ſad farewell, and betook them to their

ſeveral callings, Monford to his mumping trade, his wife to her wheel, and the daughter to ſeek her fortune.

Pretty Beſſey having left her fathers houſe, travelled along the road, until ſhe

came to Stratford, truſting to fortune and her good angels to direct her. — And ſo, travelling all the night, by ſun-riſing ſhe got to Rumford, where finding herſelf faint, ſhe betook herſelf to an inn; there ſitting down, we called for ſomething to refreſh herſelf, looking penſive, and ſighing at her hard fortune; which the miſtreſs perceiving, aſked her, Whence ſhe came? and whither ſhe was bound? She ſaid, She was forced, contrary to her expectations, to ſeek her fortune, and tho' born near to London, was now driven out.—Upon this, the good woman being taken with her carriage, demanded, if ſhe would ſtay with her, and ſhe would uſe her as a daughter, and not as a ſervant.—To this, after a while ſhe conſented, and diſcharged herſelf ſo well in whatever ſhe undertook, that ſhe gained the love and eſteem of all around her. —— Inſomuch, that her name for ingenuity and beauty began to ſpread, and abundance of young men reſorted to the houſe, on purpoſe to ſee her, who all liked her; for Nature had made her ſo charming, that ſhe could not but be admired, inſomuch that many of them, as they found an opportunity,

began to put love ſtories in her ears; to which ſhe gave but little heed, till four ſuitors of great worth beat off thoſe little aſſailants, and laid a cloſe ſiege as will appear in the next chapter.

CHAP. VII

Pretty Beſſey living at an Inn at Rumford is courted by ſeveral Perſons of good Birth and Fortune.

IT being ſecretly whiſpered, that Pretty Beſſey muſt be more than ſhe ſeemed, made her reputation higher; inſomuch, that the inukeeper's ſon, a London merchant, a gentleman of good eſtate, and a rich Knight, courted her favour. To whoſe importunities ſhe urged the meanneſs of her birth, and inequality of her fortune, deſiring them to deſiſt from their undertakings. This modeſt objection of hers poſſeſſed them with farther imaginations of the worth of her parentage, and gave more fuel to the fire; ſo eaſy are men to believe the things they would have. Inſomuch that they began

to renew their love, by offering her jewels, rings, &c. which she refused, on account of her character; therefore she resolved to discover her parents, and that way to try the sincerity of their affections; and she accordingly did so.

CHAP. VIII.

Pretty Bessey declares her Parents, and loses all her Lovers but one.

OUR beautiful Virgin, being pressed for love and enjoyment, found herself obliged to take a course to get rid of her lovers, or allot one of them to her share; wherefore she told them she was not at her own disposal, and if they loved her as they pretended, she was contented her father should chuse one for her, whose choice should be hers.

This made them eager to know to whose share she should fall, and therefore desired her to inform them where her father lived.

My parents, worthy sirs, live on Bethnal Green; my father is led with a Dog

and a bell, living on the charity of good people; my mother a woman that ſpins for her bread. — Theſe are my parents, and I will not marry without their conſent.

This ſtruck our gallants as mute as a mouſe; after which they ſcrupled to believe that ſuch home-ſpun people could be the parents of ſo charming a maid; but ſhe giving them an account of her leaving them, made them ſcratch their noddles, ſtamp on the ground, and draw in their horns faſter than before they put them out. The Merchant, Gentleman, and innkeeper's ſon, declaring if ſo, ſhe was no wife for them; but the Knight, who was inflamed with love, and having a great eſtate, did not ſtand ſo much for intereſt, as the pleaſing his fancy, after he had paused a little, took the bluſhing maid by the hand, and ſaid, You ſee, my deareſt, how thoſe who courted you in hopes of a fortune, are vaniſhed, now they find their miſtake, will you yield to one more conſtant? you ſhall, without delay, be ſole miſtreſs of my heart. To which ſhe anſwered with a ſigh, Alas! Sir, I dare not expect ſo great a happi-

neſs; though I confeſs I eſteemed you above the reſt; yet I would not diſpoſe of myſelf, without the conſent of my father and mother; for though they are poor, they are nevertheleſs my parents.

This modeſty kindled his paſſion more and more.—Wherefore, after much diſcourſe, and many vows of conſtancy, it was agreed, that he ſhould be ready with a horſe and ſervants the next morning early, and ſhe would come and ride with him to Bethnal Green, to require the old people's conſent.—Yet this was not carried on ſo ſecret, but the ſpies abroad diſcovered it, not only to the Knight's Uncle, who managed his eſtate, but likewiſe to moſt of the young men of Rumford, who were her admirers.

CHAP. IX.

Pretty Beſſey rides behind the Knight to her Father's Houſe, where the Beggar drops Angels with the Knight's Uncle.

OUR beautiful Virgin meeting her courteous Knight at the appointed time, relying on his fidelity, got up behind

him.—But ſcarce were they out of town, before the Knight's uncle coming to the inn, and miſſing them, ſuſpected what had been told him to be true, and followed them to prevent the match; as did likewiſe the young men who were ſmitten with her, to take her from the

Knight, who they feared had carried her away by force.

Thus great was the confuſion and hurry, and the townſmen taking the nearer way, got before them, 'ere they arrived at Bethnal Green, and fell upon him, without giving him leave to ſpeak for himſelf; ſo there began a ſharp conflict until ſuch time as ſome perſons coming by, parted them. — When they, being informed of the truth of the matter, aſked his pardon, which he granted, and diſmiſſing them, went on his way, till coming to the old man's door, they alighted, which made him ſtart from the fire, and put his head out at window, not underſtanding the meaning of horſes trampling at the door. Preſently the Knight's uncle came puffing and blowing at a ſtrange rate; crying, Why, how now Nephew! what's this I hear of you? are you mad to diſgrace your family, by marrying a beggars brat? O for ſhame! for ſhame! conſider better than to make yourſelf a laughing ſtock to the world by ſuch an untimely match. How came this about, you ſaucy baggage you? but however; I ſay nephew, leave her, and I will provide you a match;

who ſhall be rich, and ſuitable to your condition.

To this the young Knight would have replied; but the Beggar growing angry to hear his daughter ſo abuſed, thus interrupted him:

I cannot ſee you at all, ſir, but I hear you too much, and more than becomes a gentleman; nor do I count my daughter ſo mean to be railed on at my own door; therefore, ſir, hold your prating, or I will feel for you with my cudgel. If your kinſman don't think my child a fit match for him, let him let her alone, and welcome: I think in good breeding ſhe is not wanting, and for money let it be known to you her father is ready to droy Angels with you for his girl; take notice of that!

This ſmart ſpeech put the gentleman to a non-plus for a while, and both comming to milder terms, the dropping buſineſs was agreed upon.

The gentleman immediately ſent his ſervant to fetch what gold he had, while the beggar from under a heap of rags, pulled out a cat-ſkin or two, ſtuffed with gold: And each party being ready, they rained a golden ſhower ſo plentifully, that

the gentleman's ſtock failed him; and the Beggar not hearing it chink, fell into a laughter, ſaying, How, now, ſir, is your money done ſo ſoon? I thought at firſt you had more words than money: Pray for your credit's ſake, try your friends; for I have three or four cat-ſkins more, with gold puddings in their bellies.—Indeed, ſaid the gentleman I am content to own you have outdone me, and think you have the philoſopher's ſtone, or keep a familiar, to bring it to you from the golden mountains; but ſeeing the world goes ſo well with you, I ſhall no further go about to perſwade my nephew from being your ſon-in-law, but beg pardon for what I have done.—Oh! do you ſo, ſaid the beggar, then things perhaps may may be better ſtill.—Then turning to the Knight, Gather up, ſaid he, theſe looſe corns I have ſcattered; and there is another cat-ſkin to make juſt a thouſand pounds, beſides an hundred more to buy her a gown. Take this as her preſent portion, and as you behave yourſelf expect more hereafter. Remember I give her to you with my bleſſing. Go to church and be married, in God's name.

Upon this the Knight and his miſtreſs falling on their knees, gave him thanks, and departed; whilſt thoſe who had been her ſuitors, hearing what had happened, were ready to hang themſelves through madneſs.

CHAP. X.

Pretty Beſſey married to the Knight, and her true Pedigree diſcovered at a grand Feſtival.

THINGS coming to this paſs, great preparations was made for the wedding, to which reſorted many worthy perſons.—No coſt was ſpared in rich apparel, or ſumptuous fare, while the lovely

ride was led to the church by the worthy bridegroom: and when the sacred bands were tied, they went back with

the like splendor unto the place of festival.——Excellently did she become and grace what she wore, nature having made her an exact patern of beauty.——Being arrived at home, and the table spread, the bride, now of a beggar's daughter made a Lady, took her place, outshining the other beauties that were there, as far as the moon is outshon by the sun. And now nothing was wanting but the old Beggar and his wife, who soon came, dressed in silk and velvet, embroidered with gold; so all things went on in mirth and great was the satisfaction the company received in their repast, but more in the

muſic, dancing, maſquerading, &c. —— And in the concluſion the old man ſung the following ſong:

The BLIND MAN's Song.

YOU gallants all, that here are come,
To make this day more happy prove,
Know, tho' I'm blind, I am not dumb,
But wiſh your happineſs and love.

The bride, tho' her birth ſeem but mean,
Deſcended of a worthy race;
Her anceſtors they great have been,
If you her pedigree do trace.

Know ſhe is Monford's daughter fair,
Who loſt his ſight in wars with France,
Who ever ſince in begging here,
Did take this thriving happy chance.

Conſider bridegroom than her birth,
Who ſome do think but mean and low:
As much of honour can bring forth,
As you have riches for to ſhew.

The name of Monford, which had been held ſo famous for virtue and valour in thoſe days, did not a little cauſe wonder in the hearers, who deſiring him to explain himſelf, plainly told them his adventures in France and England, and how he took up the trade of begging, and the like; which cauſed a general joy, ſince all that had formerly known by that name, ſuppoſed him to be dead. So the bridegroom was now pronounced more happy than ever; and old Monford promiſing, for the credit of his daughter, to leave off the begging trade, and to live upon what he had got, the day was concluded to the joy and ſatisfaction of all parties.

FINIS.